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'Oedipus' succeeds, despite difficulties

Emma Dray Braswell | Staff Writer Sep 26, 2018

The performance of Oedipus, kicked off the beginning of the Classical Week hosted by the Shackouls Honors College. This play was meant to be held in the Griffis Courtyard, but due to rain, it was moved inside to Griffis Hall, which resulted in a few interesting changes.

This play began with greeters at the door, who, in the spirit of ancient Greece, wore bed sheets over their clothing as a pretense of togas.

While the greeters made it feel like a last-minute costume-party rather than an actual event, scrolls were handed out with information on the play. These were both useful and a good way to bring ancient Greece into the experience.

On top of the fancy scrolls and the not-so-fancy bed sheet togas, there were gyros offered beforehand for the audience who arrived early. This was a great touch, as it yet again brought Greece into the room a bit more and kept guests happy.

The background music prior to the performance, while overly dramatic as it was, fit the overly dramatic storyline of Oedipus, but lacked the connection to ancient Greece, which was a bit disappointing.

Once the play started and Oedipus was introduced, as well as several other major characters, the townspeople came in.

Because of the multiple levels of the Griffis lobby, the performers utilized the layout of the room, and the townspeople were introduced in a very artistic way.

This group of performers encircled the lobby throughout the multiple levels, speaking in unison and essentially created a surround sound for the audience. The surround-sound effect of multiple people saying the same things from everywhere around the room in this particular moment was one of the best things about the performance. However, the townspeople's parts went downhill from there.

The actors playing the townspeople gave acceptable performances, but once they came to the first floor, they sat directly in front of the audience.

Because the audience was sitting on the ground, this proved to be an issue. How could people in the audience see? How could they hear? The short answer is that they could not.

Sitting in front of everyone would have been fine. However, these townspeople would periodically stand up and stay standing for a few minutes, which resulted in the audience not being able to see or hear what was going on.

On top of that, these townspeople spent most of their standing time facing away from the audience. I am unsure if they were directed to do these things or not, but it was not a good call because they were hard to hear as well as blocking the audience's sightline of the other actors.



Again, the townspeople individually gave entertaining performances, but these issues distracted from not only their specific performances, but the performances of everyone else in the play as well.

When the main actors, Oedipus, Jocaste and Creon, were not being blocked by the townspeople, their performances were, for the most part, outstanding.

Jocaste in particular gave an entirely convincing performance. Even in the end when Oedipus was the focus and realized who he truly was, Jocaste was on the sidelines looking as though she was about to have a mental breakdown.

The fact Chatham Kennedy, playing Jocaste, managed to pull off such a dramatic role throughout the play so successfully was incredibly impressive.

Not only that, but Oedipus, played by Joseph Rutherford, gave an outstanding performance as well. He certainly played the part well, and the actor earned the center role through his performance.

Tiresias, however, played by Arvind Loganathand, played the most convincing part of everyone in the play. While he only truly had one scene, his character as an elderly blind prophet was accurately portrayed. The actor gave an amazing performance by changing his voice to sound older throughout his part, as well as gazing off into nothingness, as though he were really blind. Through these things, he created an impressive illusion of the prophet Tiresias.

This play was certainly enjoyable, and while there were a few technical issues, the actual performances were impressive and convincing. The honors college's hard work paid off, and the play was evidence of the hard work they put in. This kick-off event for Classics Week was, overall, a success.